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# CONSTANTINOPLE—AND THEN?

BY EDWIN DAVIES SCHOONMAKER

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[The recent capture of Bagdad by the British has a most vital bearing upon the future of Constantinople and the world-interests there centering. There have been greater military successes during the present war, but few if any of such far-reaching diplomatic consequences as the fall of the Mesopotamian city. As the temporary terminus of the projected railroad, completed thus far, would sooner or later find its way to the Gulf, a German Bagdad has for years been the same sort of thorn in the side of Great Britain as was a Russian Port Arthur in the side of Japan. It was Germany's sword pointed and moving straight toward the heart of India. How important in the mind of British statesmen is this terminus is evidenced by the fact that at the risk of having her army cut off from its base by the German submarine, Great Britain has thrown 150,000 men into this strategic place. No other army of anything like equal numbers has written its name so large upon the future as has this Anglo-Indian army under General Maude.

If Great Britain can hold Bagdad—and at the present writing there seems little doubt of it—Germany's dream of an Eastern empire, that dream which lured her into the present war, is at an end.—EDITOR.]

No city in the world has been the cause, directly and indirectly, of so much strife and so much bloodshed as has Constantinople, the storm-center of the ages. Successively, one after another, it has drawn into conflict under its walls virtually every people that has risen to power since the day it was founded twenty-five centuries ago, Persian, Greek, Roman, Goth, Venetian, Christian, Turk, Briton, Slav; all of them seeming to perceive that Constantinople somehow is the key to the control of Europe and Asia and possibly also of the oceans beyond. And to-day it is this same splendid city which, as a lure behind the Balkans, is again drawing rival Powers to the Strait. In this fateful spot, and one may

say in this spot alone, the nexus of two continents, converge the ambitions of the three great empires of the world, Great Britain, Russia, Germany.

There is a connection, which Great Britain very early perceived, between Constantinople and the mastery of the Mediterranean which in the West passes out through a narrow, British-controlled Strait into the Atlantic, and in the East through a narrow British-controlled canal into the Pacific. This is the reason why for a century in council and in war, with the most deplorable consequences, Great Britain vigorously upheld Turkey. Under no circumstances was Russia to be allowed to come down to the city and menace the waters beyond. The Crimean War, in which Great Britain summoned to her aid France and Sardinia, was the Lion's armed warning that the Bear should stay away. And later, when time and again Turkish atrocities in the Balkans and Armenia, not unlike those which have recently taken place, had aroused the civilized world and were weakening the hold of Turkey upon the Strait, it was Great Britain, with her eyes upon the safety of her trade-routes, that stood between Turkey and the world.

To Russia, Constantinople is the promise of the future, the one gate through which, in the opinion of her people, Russia can pass to the great destiny that awaits her. Probably no other unconcealed ambition of a single Power has done more to keep Europe under arms than this old ambition of Russia to possess Constantinople. Intrigue after intrigue, war after war, absorption of provinces now in Europe and now in Asia, all aimed at the dislodgment of the Turk and the attainment of the magical city which looks down the Aegean into the Mediterranean and out into the oceans beyond.

To Germany also, Constantinople is a gate, an escape from the eternal menace of the British fleet into the unlimited food supplies of Asia Minor, and a safe route to the markets of the Orient. Between Germany and this gate into her larger life there lay at the beginning of the present war three links which for convenience we may call the Balkan chain; Roumania in the north, Bulgaria in the center, and Greece in the south. The first of these is a country inhabited by a Latin people who look to Italy as mother and who are devotedly attached to France and Belgium; the second is as distinctly Slavic, long the Balkan confederate

of Russia and designed by Russia to be the head of the Balkan Union which, however, the other Powers refused to allow to come into existence; the third is Hellenic, a country which, until the outbreak of the present war, looked with admiration and gratitude to England and France as her liberators and the guardians of her national life.

In not one of these countries was there any national leaning toward Germany. And yet we are confronted by the striking fact that the rulers of all three of them are of German blood. And quietly since the accession of these German Princes to their thrones the Germanization of the three countries has proceeded steadily and without serious interruption. In every case German loans have followed the German Prince; German concessions have followed the German loans; German traders have followed the German concessions; and now the German soldier, breaking down from the North, threatens to consolidate and make available for the Germanization of Constantinople and the surrounding regions the labors of all who have preceded him. Berlin, Vienna, Bucharest, Sofia, Athens, these are the great and growing forts of German power reaching from the North Sea into the very heart of the Mediterranean.

This, in brief, is the tremendous meaning of events which for more than a century have been gathering and which are now coming to a head between the Carpathians in the north and Athens in the south, a region which, in its bearing upon the issues we are considering, is simply the environs of Constantinople.

No one who has given any attention to the affairs of this unhappy region will deny that the harvest of wars which it has produced has sprung from seeds sown in this receptive soil by one or the other of these rival empires. It is the hand of Russia and Germany and Great Britain, playing for the possession or the control of the strategic city on the Bosphorus, that has pushed now against the Turk and now against one another the petty pawns of native states and races. Down here it was, in this hot-bed of conflicting ambitions, that the war began and down here, very properly it would seem, it is to come to an end. "Not worth the blood of a single Prussian grenadier" though Bismarck pronounced the Balkans, it promises to become the grave not only of many grenadiers but of vast national hopes.

In what other spot in the countries at war do the inter-

ests of the three empires cross as they cross down here in the city of the Turk? Not in northern France, for with northern France neither Great Britain nor Russia is directly and vitally concerned. Not in Belgium, for while to Great Britain Belgium may have a meaning closely related to safety, this meaning does not reach Russia. Not in Poland. Though to Germany Poland may seem another Belgium, inseparably associated with the security of the Fatherland, to Great Britain it is a pawn of little consequence save in the large game of empire. Only upon the Dardanelles, where the great dream of Russia runs counter to the great dream of Germany, are Great Britain and Russia also not allies but rivals.

It is idle for statesmen to talk of concluding a permanent peace upon the basis of straightening out the tangle in northern France and Belgium and Poland, and dismiss as something of secondary importance the mighty knot which ties not one or two but all three of these empires to Constantinople. Let us face the fact. Untie every other knot in the present conflict and leave untied this troublesome knot in the capital of the Near East, and the ending of the present war will be the beginning of preparations for a war even greater.

Not only is it important to keep this vital fact in mind, but by keeping it in mind it is possible to discover, projecting out of the knot down here, an end which we may safely take hold of. On every other front of the war the struggle has left wounds which cry for vengeance, as we have already seen, the moment a settlement of the difficulty is suggested. Constantinople, on the other hand, though it focuses in a larger way than any other place the supreme issues of the conflict, is sufficiently aloof from the bitterness and far enough removed from the vitals of the great contestants to make possible even now a dispassionate consideration of this city in its relation to peace. Down here it is, therefore, and not upon the other fronts, that those who are working to put an end to the strife should begin. The disposition of this city should be discussed as a thing apart.

It is perfectly clear, to begin with, that permanent peace and a Turkish Constantinople are contradictions. There has not been a day since his coming into Europe centuries ago that the Turk has not been an irritant, and his occupation of the city, toward which three empires are doggedly

moving, is a standing menace to the peace of the world. Sooner or later, by the application of the eminent domain and with an agreed compensation, the nations will be compelled to put an end to the nuisance of his presence in Europe. There is ample room in his neglected provinces of Asia Minor for the full development of his national life.

Furthermore, as every one acquainted with the situation fully understands, a Turkish Constantinople is not a Turkish Constantinople at all, but a German Constantinople, an iron foot across the path of Russia, an iron hand lifted against the commerce of England.

Manifestly, if there is to be peace in Europe, the Turk must go.

With the Turk out of the way we may proceed to a consideration of the question which then naturally arises, What is to be done with the city? Is it possible so to dispose of it as to untie the old knot?

Let us face the facts squarely and meet with minds concerned only with the good of the world the claims of every side.

Let us admit that Russia has the same right to a free outlet for her commerce into the Mediterranean and into the oceans on either side, free beyond the supervision of guns upon the shore, as has Great Britain to an outlet down the Thames or Germany to an outlet down the Elbe.

Let us admit that Germany has the same right, availing herself of the Turkish concession, to build a railroad from Berlin to the Persian Gulf as has Russia to build one from Petrograd to Vladivostok, or Great Britain to build one from Cairo to the Cape.

Let us admit that Great Britain has the same right to an unmenaced trade route through the Mediterranean as has any other nation in the world.

Let us concede all these and see if it is not possible so to dispose of Constantinople as to satisfy all these ambitions and remove forever the jealousies and suspicions which time and again have torn Europe with war.

When Turkey has withdrawn into Asia, as the peace of the world demands that she withdraw, who shall take her place in the famous city? Is there anywhere a Power capable of administering impartially the interests of the many nations which there center, and strong enough to enforce its just decrees?

Does Great Britain or Russia or Germany satisfy the requirements? Evidently not.

Does France or Austria or Italy? Again evidently not.

Nor is there among the neutrals a state of such strength and recognized fairness as to be likely to receive from the hands of those who are themselves disqualified the envied place as mistress of the Strait.

Obviously, if the Turk is to go, as go he must, and if there is no Power whose qualifications meet the needs of the situation, that Power must be created.

*Constantinople must be made an international city.*

What do we mean by international city? In what respect would such a city differ from those with which we are all acquainted, particularly the great ports?

By an international city I mean a city under international jurisdiction, the site of which together with adequate surrounding territory is owned not by one nation but by all. We in the United States have an example which throws light upon and which might well serve as a precedent for this larger plan.

The District of Columbia differs from all that surrounds it and Washington differs from every other city in the land. A man from Massachusetts or Texas or Oregon who enters this city understands at once that it is something very different from St. Louis or Chicago or New York. He has somehow come out of the States into the nation, where home laws are no longer operative, and where the ground under his feet belongs as much to the man from Rhode Island as to the man from California. It is a great neutral, a district dedicated to the whole, a city of harmony.

But the reasons which urge the acquisition of Constantinople by the nations are not the same as those which urged upon the States of America the acquisition of a co-operatively-owned and a co-operatively-administered city. In the later case the District was acquired in order to meet the natural demands for a capital. In the former case it is not this primarily, but the necessity of relieving a situation which is fraught with grave peril and for which there is apparently no other solution. In the American case the acquisition of the site was incidental to what followed. In the Near Eastern case the acquisition of the site is the main thing and far exceeds in importance anything that might thereafter be done.

Compared to the complex administration of affairs that center in a capital city, the administration of a city which had been taken under international control in order to put an end to an intolerable menace would be simple in extreme. An International Commission could be provided with far less difficulty than the International Court at The Hague was provided, for only matters of local or minor importance would be administered by the Commissioners, the larger questions that might arise being referred as now to the great Court.

The effect upon the Balkans of such a disposition of Constantinople can easily be imagined. First of all, the outside pressure would be removed, the eternal pressure of Russia and Germany and the subtle counter-pressure of Great Britain, for the supreme temptation would be removed and the conflicting ambitions would, in the manner we shall see later, find free passage through the city.

Upon the whole Mediterranean region the effect of the internationalization of Constantinople and the Bosphorus would be in general precisely the same as its effect upon the Balkans.

Indeed throughout Europe the consciousness that Constantinople had passed forever beyond the reach of the rival Powers would be followed instantly by a relaxing of the tension between the capitals, an effect not unlike that which takes place in an over-heated boiler when a cock has been turned and the steam is allowed to escape. There is not an international problem of any magnitude that has to do particularly with Europe or Asia or Africa which would not be far more easily settled with the critical problem of Constantinople out of the way.

What are the chances that such a plan would be acceptable to the states engaged in the present war as well as to the neutrals whose interests also are involved and whose voice in the matter should also be heard?

I have said that to serve the purpose for which it is designed, the dissipation of the eternal war cloud that hangs over the Near East, the plan must provide a passage through the city for the great interests which now clash under its walls. Let us see if it is not possible so to administer the city as to remove the menace while allowing free outlet to those things which will contribute to the constructive work of the world.



Great Britain, as is well known, views to-day with as much alarm as ever, the approach of Russia toward the Strait. How much of the "mystery" which for more than a year has overhung the inexplicable sloth of the Allies at Saloniki and the criss-crossing between the Venezelists and the royalists at Athens, the greatest mystery of the war, has been due to the hope that something might happen which would yet come between Russia and her goal, will probably never be known. It is no secret, however, that if events should so shape themselves as to bring victory to the Allies without bringing Constantinople into the hands of Russia the outcome of the war would not be particularly displeasing to Great Britain. And if there was also an escape from the other horn of the dilemma, a German Constantinople, the satisfaction which Great Britain would feel would, we may be sure, be greatly enhanced. The only escape from the two horns is an international Constantinople. There is no other conceivable way of providing that permanent protection for her commerce through the Mediterranean which Great Britain must have.

Germany, the second of the great rivals, is as loath to see Russia cross her highway to and from the Orient as is Great Britain to see Russia established in a position commanding her trade route through the Mediterranean. There are few reverses which Germany could suffer that would compare in bitter consequences to that which would come to her from the permanent blocking of her south-eastern gate; particularly now when it has become clear that all hope of possessing the ports of Belgium and Holland must be given up. With her colonies gone, more than ever will she need to turn toward the resources of Roumania and the Balkans and also to that overland route to the Far East. But with the present powerful combination against her it is impossible that she should ever establish herself upon the Strait. The best she can hope to do is to keep her great rivals out. And this could be done only in the way I have suggested, an arrangement which should allow to Germany, as a matter of justice, the completion of her railroad to the Gulf. The old objection of Great Britain to the carrying out of this project, one of the main causes of the present war, might be removed by an international understanding that the use of the road was to be limited to commercial purposes. And there would be in the city an authority to see

that this restriction was complied with. To Germany, an international Constantinople comes little short of a necessity.

As to Russia, the third of the great rivals, such has been the persistence of the Slav in pressing home through peace and war his demand for the city upon the Bosphorus that his claim has, like our own Monroe Doctrine, assumed the dignity almost of international approval. Is there any consideration that would induce Russia to withdraw her demand? Would Russia under any circumstances consent to the arrangement suggested?

That there are vast numbers in Russia who would oppose such a suggestion with all the strength at their command there is no doubt. For with a very large part of the population undoubtedly the dream has been of Constantinople as the capital of Russia. And this passion, strong in itself, has naturally been made stronger by the inland location and the low unwholesome surroundings of Petrograd. To abandon this old ambition for a wholly Russian Constantinople, a glorious capital on that alluring site, would seem to many a hopeless blighting of the national life.

On the other hand, as I have pointed out elsewhere, there is not a nation in Europe that has led so far toward the international or done more to provide the instruments of permanent peace than has Russia. And there is little doubt, I think, that an arrangement which promised a permanent settlement of the old feud over the exclusive possession of the city, with its eternal menace of war, would find among the splendid humanitarians of Russia not a few supporters. The great fear which, it is known, the rest of Europe has of Russia, and the conviction, openly uttered by men not given to careless speech, that the present war will be succeeded by another in which the Latin and the Teuton will together face the Slav, should already have made clear to Russian statesmen what a forcible occupation of Constantinople, assuming that she were able so to occupy it, would entail. To-day Russia is secure by reason of the vast spaces that lie between her and her foes. The outlay of money alone which with her capital upon the Strait, would be necessary to purchase anything like her present security would be a burden upon the resources of the empire such as no nation of Europe could now afford and which should be assumed by a nation only when its security or its growth renders it unavoidable.

Would the establishment of a District of Columbia upon the Bosphorus and the placing of Constantinople under international authority endanger the security or check the growth of Russia? If so, even in the face of the undoubted advantages to the world of such an arrangement one might well hesitate to propose that it be carried out.

Of all the claims to Constantinople only that of Russia is backed by the sanction of a great need. And no plan looking to a removal of the Balkan irritation should be entertained which does not frankly and fairly face this need. Access to the sea must be provided for this people, and their connection with the sea must be as free from interference as the connection of any other people with the sea. In the event of the city's being taken over, therefore, the same free passage through the Dardanelles must be secured to Russia as is secured overland to Germany or through the Mediterranean to Great Britain.

With respect to the right of passage for vessels of war, upon which Russia might insist on the ground that the coming and going of such ships was necessary as a protection to her commerce, this is a matter which touches intimately the question of the freedom of the seas. If, as it is hoped and expected, the present war will forever put an end to the old doctrine of special privileges upon the seas, an adjustment of this matter in a manner satisfactory to Russia should not be difficult. It is to be hoped that the Peace Conference will make it as unnecessary for each nation to maintain and send ships of war to the ports of the world, as it is unnecessary for each merchant to send armed men to the markets of his own country.

In any event, it is well within the power of the nations so to administer the international district on the Bosphorus as to provide not only for the security but for the expanding life of Russia.

Particularly should America, so far as it lies within her power, see to it that this right of Russia is conceded and respected. Her position with respect to the Dardanelles is precisely the position of our Western States when New Orleans was controlled by a foreign Power. A free and open Bosphorus is as essential to the safety and growth of Russia as a free and open Mississippi is essential to the safety and growth of the United States.

As to the other belligerents and neutrals as well, there

is probably no consideration on the other side which would outweigh the contribution to the cause of permanent peace which such a disposition of the city would make. The main, if not the sole, desire of the nations other than the three I have mentioned is for just such equality of opportunity and such freedom from interference as an international authority upon the Strait would guarantee to all.

Such is the relation of Constantinople to permanent peace, a relation too vital to be ignored. It is of the utmost importance that the disposition of the city and its immediate surroundings should be detached from the other questions of the war and be made, at the earliest possible moment, the subject of international exchange. And there should be included in the discussion another matter which is closely associated with the taking over of the city and the establishment of an International Commission upon the Strait.

Of the gains which have come to the world from the International Court at The Hague, virtually all have come from the Court and few if any from the location. There were no international complications centering in the Dutch city which the very presence of the Court would tend to smooth out. Accessibility and the fact that Holland lay aloof from the antagonisms of the larger nations were undoubtedly the deciding factors in the choice of The Hague. But something more than convenience and aloofness should control in a matter as important as the selection of a location for an international tribunal. Economy would demand that an institution designed to prevent armed conflicts between nations should be located in a region where conflicts are bred. While the fact that there is an International Court of Arbitration, undoubtedly contributes to peace, its location at The Hague contributes nothing; whereas in Constantinople, the city of strife in a region of strife, the very presence of such a Court would be of incalculable value. Its influence in that troublesome section would be similar to that of a watchful police officer in a gang-infested quarter of a city.

Furthermore, it is highly desirable that the center of the international court should be as near as possible to the center of the forces at work among the nations. The relations of the East and the West are the supreme questions of to-morrow. China, Japan, India, Persia, these too in the near future will come to the great Court with cases to which Europe will be a party. Anything tending to strengthen the

suspicion of undue influence of Europe in the council should if possible be removed.

Now comes the query, what effect will the British success at Bagdad have upon the final disposition of Constantinople? Will Great Britain and Germany come to an understanding and co-operate in the building of the road, Germany retaining Constantinople and Great Britain Mesopotamia? Such an arrangement, if there were no obstacle in the way of carrying it out, might be a happy solution of the difficulty. But would Great Britain be willing to leave Germany in possession of Constantinople, that base from which she would easily be able to consolidate her Balkan Allies and control the Mediterranean? And would Germany be willing to leave the port of her Far Eastern trade in the hands of Great Britain? Such an arrangement would be simply a truce while each Power looked about for allies for the greater line-up.

But even were some such understanding between Great Britain and Germany possible, and an obvious make-shift it would be, what of the agreement which Great Britain has entered into to deliver Constantinople to Russia? I have already set forth the reasons why the carrying out of this agreement would be a menace to the peace of the world, producing a situation which, instead of ending militarism in Europe, would necessitate even greater armaments, particularly upon the part of Great Britain. As for the agreement, if famine should declare that there should be an end of slaughter, that would be a verdict from which there would be no appeal. The disposition of Constantinople would then be a matter for the Peace Conference to pass upon, and in the Peace Conference not passion but reason will preside. With Bagdad in her hands Great Britain will hold the trump card so far as the Near Eastern situation is concerned and will, we may be sure, use every legitimate influence to keep Constantinople out of the hands of Germany and of Russia.

But these latter will be equally opposed to Great Britain's occupation of Mesopotamia and will, I believe, insist upon her withdrawal; and to secure this they would probably be willing to cancel their claims to Constantinople. The way would then be open to the internationalization of the city, and also to the international ownership of the great road to the Persian Gulf to which all nations should have equal access and in which they should enjoy equal privileges.

EDWIN DAVIES SCHOONMAKER.